

# First and second sound modes at finite temperature in trapped Fermi gases from BCS to BEC

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We determine the temperature  $T$  dependence of first and second sound mode frequencies for trapped Fermi gases undergoing BCS to Bose Einstein condensation (BEC) crossover. Our results are based on the two fluid equations in conjunction with a microscopic calculation of thermodynamical variables. As in experiment and at unitarity, we show that the lowest radial breathing mode is  $T$  independent. At finite  $T$ , higher order breathing modes strongly mix with second sound. Their complex  $T$  dependence should provide an alternative way of measuring the transition temperature,  $T_c$ .

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The recent discovery of the superfluid phases of trapped Fermi gases has led to considerable interest in their collective mode spectrum [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7]. Among the modes of experimental interest are breathing modes as well as propagating first sound. While originally theoretical attention [8, 9, 10] was focused on ground state properties experimental measurements are naturally not restricted to temperature  $T = 0$ . Indeed there is an interesting body of information which is emerging in these Fermi gases about the finite temperature behavior [4, 5, 6] of the breathing modes and, more recently about the propagating sound velocity [7].

The purpose of this paper is to compute sound mode frequencies in spherically trapped Fermi gases undergoing BCS to Bose-Einstein condensation (BEC) crossover, at general  $T$ . We present a solution of the linearized two fluid equations and compare with recent experiments. We focus on the radial breathing modes and present predictions for second sound, as well. The structure of the two fluid equations for Bose [11] and Fermi gases [12] has been rather extensively discussed. In the crossover regime, the normal fluid is novel [13, 14], containing both fermions and noncondensed pairs, which have not been systematically included in previous collective mode literature.

Of great importance to the field as a whole is the future possibility of second sound observations, in large part because this may ultimately help assign more precise experimental values to the transition temperature  $T_c$ . While existing experimental techniques such as vortex observation [15] and density profile features [16] help establish superfluidity they provide lower bounds on  $T_c$  or determine its value for the special case of a population imbalanced system. Thermodynamical experiments measure  $T_c$  more directly [17, 18] but have been confined to unitarity. Thus other techniques, such as second sound observation will be of great value. One of the principal results of the present paper is an analysis of how second sound is coupled to the breathing modes. We demonstrate that higher order breathing modes will reveal  $T_c$  through this coupling, and therefore are an alternative to direct second sound measurements. However, the lowest breathing mode appears to be remarkably  $T$  independent at unitarity. This has been observed experimentally [4, 5] and argued to follow from isen-

tropic considerations [6]. Here we show, that even when we treat the full coupling between first and second sound, we obtain similar  $T$  independent behavior at unitarity.

At the core of the two fluid theory is the assumption that hydrodynamics is valid and that there are frequent collisions which produce a state of local thermodynamical equilibrium. Although there are some exceptions [19], reaching the two fluid regime has not been easy for atomic Bose gases. Two fluid dynamics are more readily achieved for Fermi gases, principally because in the crossover regime the large scattering lengths produce sufficient collisions. Nevertheless there has been considerable theoretical interest in setting up [12] and solving [20] the two fluid equations for Bose condensates. Indeed, hydrodynamical approaches have successfully addressed both the  $T = 0$  and normal state regimes of the Bose gases [21] and demonstrated that the breathing mode frequencies are the same. Here, by contrast we address the Fermi gas case in a trap. Because they interact more strongly near unitarity, hydrodynamical descriptions have been argued quite convincingly [6, 9, 22] to be valid.

Previous theoretical work has been confined to  $T = 0$  treatments of a harmonic trap, or to finite  $T$  theories [22] of a uniform gas. Our work is most similar in spirit to an earlier Bose gas study [20] although we introduce different numerical techniques as well as address fermions rather than bosons. We note that the input thermodynamics of systems undergoing the BCS-BEC crossover which is used in the present paper, has been rather well calibrated against experimental measurements in Ref. [17] and is based on a finite temperature extension of the simplest (BCS-Leggett) ground state. In the absence of a trap our results are for the most part similar to those in Ref. [22].

We begin with the two fluid equations which describe the dynamical coupling of the superfluid velocity  $\mathbf{v}_s$  and the normal velocity  $\mathbf{v}_n$ . Just as in the spirit of the original Landau two fluid equations we ignore viscosity terms. In the presence of a trap potential  $V_{ext} = \frac{1}{2}m\omega_{ho}r^2$ , the two fluid equations are given by  $m\frac{\partial \mathbf{v}_s}{\partial t} + \nabla(\mu + V_{ext} + m\frac{\mathbf{v}_s^2}{2}) = 0$ ,  $\frac{\partial \mathbf{j}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \mathbf{\Pi} = -n\nabla V_{ext}$ ,  $\frac{\partial n}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \mathbf{j} = 0$  and  $\frac{\partial (ns)}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (ns\mathbf{v}_n) = 0$ , with  $\Pi^{ij} = p\delta^{ij} + n_s\mathbf{v}_s^i\mathbf{v}_s^j + n_n\mathbf{v}_n^i\mathbf{v}_n^j$ ,  $n = n_s + n_n$  and

$\mathbf{j} = n_s \mathbf{v}_s + n_n \mathbf{v}_n$ . Here  $\mu$  is the chemical potential,  $p$  the pressure, and  $s$  the entropy *per particle*. Moreover, we have  $n_n \mathbf{v}_n + n_s \mathbf{v}_s = n \mathbf{v}$ . Here  $n_s$  ( $v_s$ ) and  $n_n$  ( $v_n$ ) denote the superfluid and normal densities (velocities), respectively. We use the subscript “0” to denote equilibrium quantities such that  $\mathbf{v}_{s0} = \mathbf{v}_{n0} = 0$ ,  $\nabla(\mu + V_{ext}) = 0$ ,  $\nabla p_0 = -n_0 \nabla V_{ext}$ , and  $n_0, s_0, \mu_0, p_0$  are independent of time  $t$ . Combining this with the thermodynamic relation  $d\mu = -s dT + dp/n$ , we have  $\nabla T_0 = 0$ , implying that temperature  $T_0$  is constant in the trap. It then follows that in equilibrium  $\mu = \mu_0 - V_{ext}$ , consistent with the Thomas-Fermi approximation.

For small deviations from equilibrium, we may linearize the two fluid equations. Eliminating the velocities  $\mathbf{v}_s$  and  $\mathbf{v}_n$ , one finds [12, 20]

$$m \frac{\partial^2 \delta n}{\partial t^2} = \nabla \cdot \left( n_0 \nabla \frac{\delta p}{n_0} \right) - \nabla \cdot (\delta T n_0 \nabla s_0) \quad (1)$$

$$m \frac{\partial^2 \delta s}{\partial t^2} = \frac{1}{n_0} \nabla \cdot \left( \frac{n_{s0} n_0 s_0^2}{n_{n0}} \nabla \delta T \right) - (\nabla s_0)^2 \delta T + \nabla s_0 \cdot \nabla \left( \frac{\delta p}{n_0} \right) \quad (2)$$

We will focus on  $\delta\mu(r)$  and  $\delta T(r)$  as the principal variables. This choice, which is different from that in Ref. [20], is made because both variables are non vanishing at the trap edge so that in a basis set expansion they will satisfy the same boundary conditions. Moreover, the two fluid equations are simplest in this form. Expressing  $\delta s$ ,  $\delta p$  and  $\delta n$  in terms of  $\delta\mu$ ,  $\delta T$ , the two fluid equations can be rewritten as

$$\left( \frac{\partial n}{\partial \mu} \right)_T \frac{\partial^2 \delta\mu}{\partial t^2} + \left( \frac{\partial n}{\partial T} \right)_\mu \frac{\partial^2 \delta T}{\partial t^2} = \frac{A}{m}, \quad (3)$$

$$\left( \frac{\partial s}{\partial \mu} \right)_T \frac{\partial^2 \delta\mu}{\partial t^2} + \left( \frac{\partial s}{\partial T} \right)_\mu \frac{\partial^2 \delta T}{\partial t^2} = \frac{B}{m}, \quad (4)$$

with

$$A = \nabla \cdot (n \nabla \delta\mu) + \nabla \cdot (n_s \nabla \delta T),$$

$$B = \frac{1}{n} \nabla \cdot \left( \frac{n n_s}{n_n} s^2 \nabla \delta T \right) + \nabla s \cdot \nabla \delta\mu + s \nabla s \cdot \nabla \delta T.$$

It is understood that all coefficients of  $\delta\mu$  and  $\delta T$  are calculated in equilibrium so that we drop the subscript “0”. The thermodynamical quantities in equilibrium can be calculated following Ref. [23], based on the standard local density approximation (LDA),  $\mu(r) = \mu_0 - V_{ext}(r)$ . Their derivatives with respect to  $T$  and  $\mu$  can be calculated analytically, and their gradients can be obtained via  $\nabla f = -\left(\frac{\partial f}{\partial \mu}\right)_T \nabla V_{ext}$ , where  $f$  denotes any of the variables  $(n, n_s, n_n, s)$ .

To solve the two coupled differential equations (3) and (4), we assume a simple harmonic time dependence  $\delta\mu, \delta T \propto e^{-i\omega t}$ . We cast the differential two fluid equations into an eigenfunction problem with  $\omega^2$  playing the role of eigenvalue and the eigenfunctions given by the amplitudes of  $\delta\mu$  and  $\delta T$ .

Since neither  $T$  nor  $\mu$  depends on the density, they will not vanish at the trap edge. Our boundary conditions require that all thermodynamic variables be smooth (but not necessarily zero) at the trap edge. At finite  $T$ , the density in the trap decreases exponentially when the local chemical potential becomes negative at large radius. We choose, thus, to expand  $\delta\mu$  and  $\delta T$  in terms of Jacobi polynomials. For our numerics we choose the matrix dimension to be 300; we have similarly investigated matrices of dimension 200 up to 900, and found little change in our principal findings.

We now turn to an important aspect of our numerics. Because we generate some 300 frequencies in our numerical approach it is essential to establish a mechanism for systematically identifying first and second sound modes. To help find such a “fingerprint”, we introduce a “decoupling approximation” based on reducing Eqs. (3) and (4) to  $\delta\mu = g_1(\delta\mu, \delta T)$ ,  $\delta T = g_2(\delta\mu, \delta T)$ , where  $g_{1,2}$  are known functions. We eliminate cross terms by setting  $\delta T = 0$  in  $g_1$  and  $\delta\mu = 0$  in  $g_2$ . With these two decoupled equations it is then relatively straightforward to associate a profile plot of the numerically calculated  $\delta p(r)$  and  $n \delta s(r)$  vs  $r$  within a trap with first or second sound-like modes. Here we convert  $\delta\mu$  and  $\delta T$  to  $\delta p$  and  $\delta s$  via  $\delta p = n \delta\mu + n s \delta T$  and  $\delta s = \left(\frac{\partial s}{\partial \mu}\right)_T \delta\mu + \left(\frac{\partial s}{\partial T}\right)_\mu \delta T$ . We stress that this procedure differs somewhat from that in Ref. [20] where it was argued that one could associate second sound with a mode in which the oscillations in the thermodynamical variable  $\delta T(r)$  were constrained to be in the condensate region of the trap. As explained below, we do not find this to be the case. An important check on our procedure is that we find that there is no sign of second sound above  $T_c$ .

Up to this point everything is general applying to both Fermi and Bose superfluids. All that is needed is a microscopic theory for thermodynamical variables. Here we use a calculational framework we have developed for treating BCS-BEC crossover in trapped Fermi gases [23, 24] which emphasizes the importance of pseudogap effects or finite momentum pairs. The local thermodynamical potential (density)  $\Omega = \Omega_f + \Omega_b$  is associated with a contribution from gapped fermionic excitations  $\Omega_f$  as well as from non-condensed pairs, called  $\Omega_b$ . We have

$$\Omega_f = -\frac{\Delta^2}{g} + \sum_{\mathbf{k}} [(\xi_{\mathbf{k}} - E_{\mathbf{k}}) - 2T \ln(1 + e^{-E_{\mathbf{k}}/T})],$$

$$\Omega_b = -Z \Delta^2 \mu_{pair} + \sum_{\mathbf{q}} T \ln(1 - e^{-\Omega_{\mathbf{q}}/T}). \quad (5)$$

Here  $\mu_{pair}$  is the chemical potential of the pairs which is zero below  $T_c$  and the pair dispersion  $\Omega_{\mathbf{q}}$ , along with the (inverse) residue  $Z$ , can be derived from a microscopic  $T$ -matrix theory, described elsewhere [13, 14]. Using  $\Omega$  one then arrives at thermodynamical properties such as the entropy density  $n s = -\frac{\partial \Omega}{\partial T}$  as well as self consistent equations for the total excitation gap  $\Delta$ , the contribution to  $\Delta$  from noncondensed pairs (called the pseudogap) and the number equations. These self-consistent (local) equations are simply given

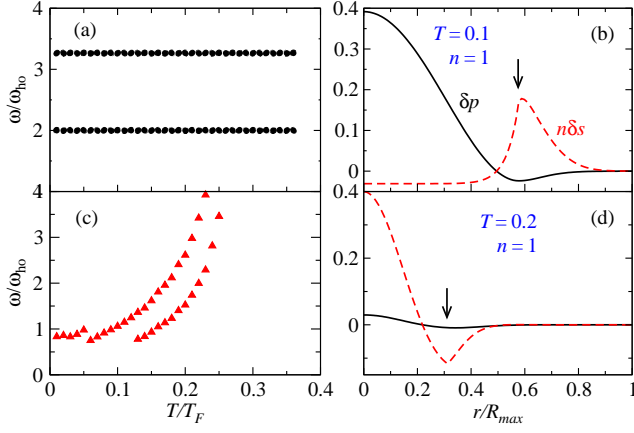


Figure 1: (Color online) Behavior of the first (upper row) and second sound (lower row) modes for a spherical trap at unitarity within the “decoupling approximation” (see text). The left column shows the  $T$ -dependence of the frequencies, while the right shows corresponding typical spatial oscillation profiles for  $\delta p$  [(black) solid lines] and  $n\delta s$  [(red) dashed lines] at the lowest frequencies, which provide fingerprints of first and second sound. For the second sound,  $n\delta s$  dominates and changes sign within the condensate. Here  $T_c \approx 0.27T_F$ , and the arrows indicate the condensate edge.

by  $\frac{\partial \Omega}{\partial \Delta} = 0$ ,  $\frac{\partial \Omega}{\partial \mu_{pair}} = 0$  and  $n = -\frac{\partial \Omega}{\partial \mu}$ , subject to the total number constraint  $N = \int d^3r n(r)$ . When  $T < T_c$ , we can use the gap equation and chain rule to eliminate the variable  $\Delta$ , which is a function of  $\mu$  and  $T$ , via  $\frac{\partial \Delta}{\partial \mu} = -\frac{\partial^2 \Omega_f}{\partial \Delta \partial \mu} / \frac{\partial^2 \Omega_f}{\partial \Delta^2}$  and  $\frac{\partial \Delta}{\partial T} = -\frac{\partial^2 \Omega_f}{\partial \Delta \partial T} / \frac{\partial^2 \Omega_f}{\partial \Delta^2}$ . Similarly, when  $T > T_c$  we use the gap and pseudogap equations to eliminate the variables  $\Delta$  and  $\mu_{pair}$  to arrive at thermodynamical quantities.

Figure 1 shows the lowest two collective modes at unitarity in a spherical trap, obtained by solving the chemical potential or temperature fluctuation equation in the decoupling approximation scheme described earlier. It is evident that our approximated breathing mode frequency [Fig. 1(a)] is independent of temperature. We understand this result by noting that the decoupled equation for the breathing mode is given by  $-\omega^2 \delta \mu = C_{\mu\mu 1} \nabla^2 \delta \mu + C_{\mu\mu 2} \cdot \nabla \delta \mu$  where  $C_{\mu\mu 1} = n \left( \frac{\partial \mu}{\partial n} \right)_s$  and  $C_{\mu\mu 2} = \nabla \mu$ . At unitarity,  $n \left( \frac{\partial \mu}{\partial n} \right)_s = \frac{2}{3} \mu$ . The only  $T$ -dependence contained in  $\mu_0 \equiv \mu(r=0)$  can be eliminated via a simple re-scaling of  $r \rightarrow r \sqrt{2\mu_0/m\omega_{ho}^2}$ , yielding a  $T$ -independent breathing mode frequency. These arguments can be shown to be equivalent to the isentropic assumption of Ref. [6], where  $\mathbf{v}_s = \mathbf{v}_n$  is assumed in the two fluid model, leading to two simpler coupled equations associated with the Euler and the continuity equations.

By contrast, the second sound mode frequency we obtain increases rapidly with temperature. Some typical oscillation profiles of  $\delta p(r)$  and  $n\delta s(r)$  are shown in the right two panels of Figure 1. Although the “entropy density oscillations”  $n\delta s(r)$  fall off at large  $r$ , the entropy per particle  $\delta s(r)$  oscillations (not shown) increase very rapidly upon entering the normal region. Consequently temperature fluctuations  $\delta T$  be-

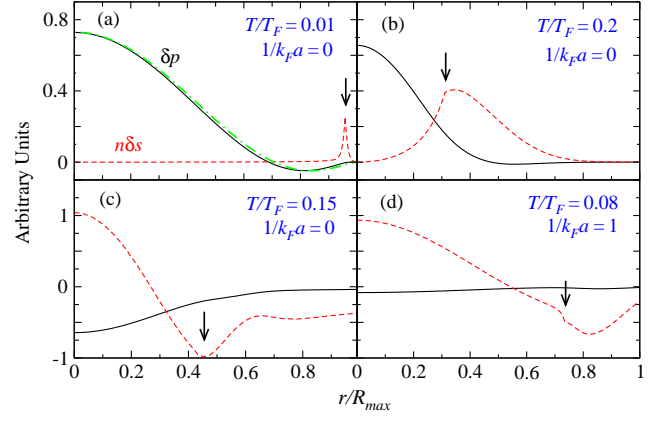


Figure 2: (Color online) Typical spatial oscillation profiles for  $\delta p$  [(black) solid lines] and  $n\delta s$  [(red) dashed lines] obtained from the fully coupled equations for a spherical trap at (a-c) unitarity and (d)  $1/k_F a = 1$  at different  $T$ , for the first (top row) and second (bottom row) sound modes. Also shown in (a) is the  $T = 0$  analytical result [(green) dot-dashed curve]. The arrows indicate condensate edge.

come large at the trap edge.

Our identification of first sound for the decoupled case leads us to associate this mode in a coupled situation with a profile for which at the trap center  $\delta p$  has a large amplitude, while  $n\delta s$  is almost zero (with a small peak near the trap edge) as in Fig. 1(b). By contrast, in the trap center the second sound mode has large entropy fluctuations, while the pressure fluctuations are almost zero [Fig. 1(d)]. These features will serve as fingerprints for distinguishing (lower order) first and second sound modes at finite temperatures.

Figure 2 shows some typical eigenfunction profiles of the lowest modes obtained in the spherical trap upon solution of the *fully coupled* two fluid equations. The first row corresponds to the breathing mode in the unitary case. The good agreement between the very low  $T$  result for  $\delta p$  and the  $T = 0$  analytical solution (green dashed line) in Fig. 2(a) helps validate our numerical scheme. Figure 2(b) corresponds to a high temperature breathing mode. In this regime the pseudogap region outside the superfluid core is relatively large and the peak in  $n\delta s(r)$  is accordingly very broad. The lower two panels correspond to second sound modes for the unitary and BEC cases. By contrast with the breathing modes, here  $n\delta s$  has a larger amplitude than  $\delta p$  with an opposite sign. Clearly this is very similar to what we observed in the decoupled mode analysis of Fig. 1.

Figures 3(a-c) address the fully coupled equations and show the behavior of the lowest breathing (upper branch) and second sound mode (lower branch) frequencies as a function of temperature in a spherical trap for  $1/k_F a = 1, 0$ , and  $-0.5$ , respectively. For all three values of  $1/k_F a$  we find very little sign of  $T_c$  in the lowest breathing mode frequency. In contrast, the second sound mode frequencies increase with  $T$  and disappear above  $T_c$ . Figure 3(d) presents a more complete series of modes for the unitary case. Here the lines serve as guides to the eye for the lowest (blue) and higher order (green)

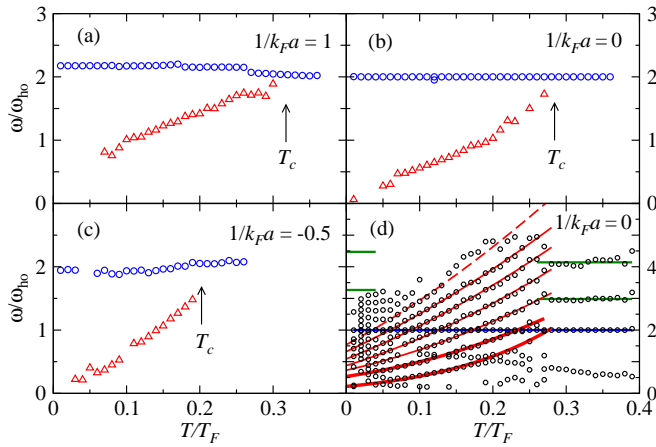


Figure 3: (Color online) Temperature dependence of breathing mode and second sound frequencies in a spherical trap. Panels (a-c) are for the near-BEC, unitary, and near-BCS cases, respectively. The upper and lower branches in (a-c) represent the lowest breathing mode and second sound frequencies, respectively. In (d), more complete results (open circles) are shown at unitarity, where the lines serve as guides to the eye for the breathing mode (nearly horizontal blue and green lines) and second sound (increasing red curves) frequencies.

breathing mode, and second sound (red) frequencies.

At unitarity [Fig. 3(d)] one can identify a sequence of higher order breathing modes which precisely overlap with analytical calculations for  $T = 0$ . Importantly, only the lowest of these is found to be a constant in temperature; the others are found to mix with second sound modes, as indicated in the solid and dashed (red) lines in Fig. 3(d). The behavior of the lowest mode helps to justify the isentropic assumption made in Ref. [6]. We understand this by referring back to the decoupled profiles in Figs. 1(b) and 1(c), which are seen to be quite distinct. By contrast the profiles of the decoupled first and second sound modes at higher order (not shown) appear more similar to each other than their lowest order counterparts. Indeed, the behavior of the profiles at higher order is associated with an increasing number of nodes in the curves of  $\delta p$  and  $n\delta s$  (not shown), which leads to a greater similarity between first and second sound profiles and helps explain why the higher order modes are more readily mixed [25].

In summary, we have presented predictions for future experiments on higher breathing modes and second sound in a trap. We find that *only the lowest* breathing mode frequency has very weak  $T$  dependence. For the unitary case this temperature insensitivity was clearly observed by Thomas and co-workers [6]. As a result of this experiment it should not be surprising that we find relatively weak dependencies on either side of the Feshbach resonance for this breathing mode frequency. In the literature there are experimental claims (at  $1/k_F a = 1.0$ ) which are consistent with a decrease [4] in the radial breathing mode frequency, as indeed we find here, although ours is probably too weak to reconcile the different findings in Refs. [4] and [2, 3]. Finally, our more complete studies at unitarity show that if higher order radial breathing modes can be accessed, because of their strong hybridization

with second sound, it may be possible to use these breathing modes, rather than direct second sound to determine the transition temperatures  $T_c$ . This should be of value since there are currently few experiments which can assign a value to  $T_c$  over the wider crossover regime.

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  - [25] It is interesting to note that there exists a lower frequency first-sound like mode at finite  $T$ , which we also find to be present in the “free” (but hydrodynamic) Fermi gas limit at  $T \neq 0$ .